...north pier of south entrance of the new dock, has been let to Messrs. Thomson and Hunter, who have completed several previous contracts. The south pier contract remains to let. The excavation of the half-tidal basin has been let to Mr. James Fraser.

Southport.—The contract for the erection of the new town-hall has been given to Mr. Thos. Stanley, of this town, at the sum of 2,249*l.*; the 200*l.* to be allowed by the contractor for the old building. The building is to be completed, under a weekly penalty, by 1st February next. The sum named by Mr. Stanley in his tender was about 500*l.* lower than the next above him. There were no other tenders from resident builders, and only two, it is said, from elsewhere.

Birmingham.—According to the *Midland Herald*, there appears every prospect of the speedy restoration of St. Martin's-spire, without a resort to any other means than the liberality of the townsmen. A considerable amount has already been promised. The committee are very anxious to renovate the tower also. The estimated cost of spire is 2,450*l.*; that of tower (if repaired with same scaffolding), 1,000*l.* more.—A new house is in course of erection at the Botanical Gardens, Edgbaston, for the reception of the Victoria Regina. The structure will be of glass, in wood sashes, the roof being supported by iron pillars and brackets.

Northwich.—A new Independent chapel is about to be erected at this place in a central situation. It will be built of red brick, with Runcorn-stone dressings. It will consist of a nave of five bays, the two extreme bays having transeptal projections with two gables. The transept at one side will be much deeper than the other, and will contain the vestries, with the gallery for school children above. At the other angle of the nave will be an octagonal turret, with wooden belfry and lofty slated spire with gilt cross. The style is the Geometrical. The shape of the land necessitates the peculiar arrangement of the building. The architect is Mr. Raffles Brown.

Feckenham.—Mr. E. V. Neale, the lay impropriator of this living, is said to have given orders for rebuilding the chancel of Feckenham Church; Mr. Butterfield to be the architect, and Mr. Robinson, of Redditch, the builder.

Stourbridge.—The building for the School of Design here (late the theatre) is nearly completed.

Chester.—Seven new first and second-class bathing boxes have been erected at the public baths of Chester, and private warm baths will be completed in course of two or three weeks. A tolerable number of the poorer class continue to visit the baths.——The piers of the Dredge suspension-bridge over the river are now erected, and the chain is carried across the river. The bridge was commenced on 23rd April, and all the materials have been made in Chester, the majority in a forge temporarily built at the bridge. Mr. Dredge is superintending operations. It is to the spirit of a fellow-citizen, Mr. Gerrard, says the *Chester Chronicle*, we are indebted for this last addition to the list of bridges at Chester.

Plymouth.—Resolutions have been passed at an influential public meeting in favour of the establishment of public gardens at Plymouth. It is proposed to purchase Greenbank, a property of about 11 acres, for about 8,000*l.* and to sell 3 acres of it for building ground, restrictions in the title allowing that portion only to be built on. The union of the two local Horticultural Societies in the promotion of this scheme is contemplated.

Guernsey.—The first stone of the harbour-works is to be laid, it is believed, on 21st inst.

MESSRS. MCCORMICK TAIT, BRADDEE.—Messrs. Walker have recently completed a monumental brass to the memory of Mr. William Crossley, Q.C. and his wife Ellen, in Grimsargh Chapel, near Preston. It is of very large size, includes figures of the two persons commemorated, under very elegant canopies, and is, in arrangement and drawing, one of the best, if not *the* best, modern work of the kind that has come before us.

POSITION OF MR. A. W. PUGIN.

It has been a source of grief, and long known, that Mr. Pugin's mind had given away under an excessive strain of professional work and nervous excitement, and that he had been placed in a private asylum. Perhaps no man in the profession has made greater self-sacrifices than Mr. Pugin, and certainly no believer in the Roman Catholic faith has ever been more devoted to it, giving away all he had to build churches, schools, &c. Considering his means, no one has applied his worldly earnings as Mr. Pugin has done for the support of his religious convictions. It is said that he is now so reduced to beggary by his religious zeal that there are no funds to support him, and that he has actually been removed to a *public hospital!* Not a generous friend in or out of the pale of his religious faith to come forward to spare him this disgrace, if he should ever recover to feel it! Not one of the many who know what the Houses of Parliament owe to his ability: not one of his many Roman Catholic brethren who know the thousands of pounds he has spent on their Church! Not even a tradesman or manufacturer, Roman Catholic or otherwise, who has benefited by executing his designs! It seems to me most discreditable to such parties. I have no faith in Mr. Pugin's notions of art; still less in his religious beliefs; but I respect his genius, and would gladly not see him among public paupers. If a subscription could be started to relieve him from his present degraded position, my guinea at least is ready for such a purpose. F. S.

[We fully participate in the writer's remarks on this melancholy subject, and hope some endeavours will be made in the direction pointed out.—ED.]

DECORATIVE ART.

In his lecture on this subject, reported last week, Mr. Owen Jones gave utterance to some very stringent, and far more truthful and wholesome than complimentary remarks. The highest class in the land—those who ought to be the intelligent patrons of art—are almost uneducated in art, consequently incapable of encouraging it, they themselves being guided in their taste chiefly by fashion and by the interested advice of those who are the immediate ministers of fashion and its arbitrary whims and caprices. The middling classes are proud to emulate the taste of their superiors, no matter how worthless it may be, and thus "a most vicious circle is established, out of which it is impossible to escape." Even if fashion be occasionally right, it is so only accidentally, and merely temporarily. Genuine art, on the contrary, is independent of fashion; and it ought to possess that influence which is now usurped and exercised by the latter. And I myself cannot help being of opinion that such sinister influence is in a great measure to be attributed to the superciliousness with which those who stand before the public in the special and recognised character of *artists*, have hitherto looked down upon and ignored as alien from their own special and particular province, those subordinate and more mechanical branches of art which nevertheless stamp and direct popular taste.

It might be supposed that at any rate architects would qualify themselves for directing and superintending the internal completion of the buildings erected by them, especially when, as in dwelling-houses of first-rate class, so much more than the mere fabric itself is required for ultimate completeness. Nevertheless, it is only quite exceptionally that any of them ever pretend to do so. They hold fitting-up and furnishing to be no concern of theirs; so leave all such finishing touches to their work to be added *à discrétion*, which is accordingly generally done without any discretion at all; without regard to the economy of *taste*, or economy of any other kind. It is idle to say that the beauty of a room is totally independent of furniture and other accessories; because if so, a room which is really beautiful in itself ought to please just as well when unfurnished as when fully attired by decorator and upholsterer. The two last usually act upon the principle of "Nothing like leather," and the more of it the better; and while architects look down upon gentry of their calling as being only a sort of warm-millinery to houses, they look upon the others as the mere first shapers-out of what is not even presentable until decked out *comme il faut* by themselves. Thus, many a modern drawing-room is bedizened out with such an accumbrage of heterogeneous fineries as to look like a furniture bazaar, or a Noah's ark of *encumbrement* and knick-knackery, equally fashionable and vulgar.

This is an unfortunate state of things; nor is it likely to be corrected until employers themselves shall begin to acquire some well-established and sound principles of taste, instead of being governed by their own wayward whims, or else blindly submitting to the equally arbitrary and capricious mandates of mere fashion. Instead of fashion governing taste, it is taste that should control fashion, which is now the ready-made substitute for the other, and of very Brummagem quality it generally is. Such would not be the case were people but half as ready to pay for taste as they are for fashion. Is taste, then, to be bought? Yes; but the purchase-money for it is—thoughtful *study*; whereas fashion requires nothing like rational study of any kind.

Q. E. D.

THE STATE OF BLACKFRIARS-BRIDGE.

By a somewhat slow process of reasoning and supposition, the authorities interested have come at length, after the unavailing expenditure of a good deal of money, to the conclusion long since declared by us to be inevitable, that permanent and efficient repair of the present bridge is impossible, and that a new one ought to be built. Moreover, we have not even the satisfaction of being able to state that the expenditure of money on this bridge will be in any degree compensated by the conversion of it into a temporary way until the new one shall be opened; for a temporary bridge as well as a new one is recommended to be erected, and the one that now is to be at once pulled down.

Such are the recommendations now given in a report by the Bridge-house Committee to the City Council, based on a report to the committee itself by Messrs. Walker and Burges, supported by the opinion of Sir William Cubitt and Mr. Brunel, who were consulted in the matter.

In defence of past outlay on the present sinking structure, it is stated in the engineers' report that when a repair was recommended in 1833 "at a cost of 80,000*l.* exclusive of abutments and approaches, which proves in 1850 not to be permanent," they "did not suppose the bed of the river would have been allowed to get so low as they found it in 1850, close to the fifth pier, nor did they anticipate the sinking of the clay under the piers" in the way described. But why, then, after all this unavailing expense and disappointment, still persist, even in 1850, in so desperate an undertaking? Little is said of the recommendations then made and the expense then incurred, only it is stated that there has since been no further sinking; but of what avail is it that from August 1851, when the work was finished, no further sinking has been observed, since we are now told that the bridge must come down, and in fact that if not taken down "there is little doubt not only that the present defective pier will sink still lower, but (that the sinking) will be extended to the other piers."

Messrs. Cubitt and Brunel recommend that a new bridge should be constructed on a plan similar in general principle to that of a design proposed by Messrs. Walker and Burges. This bridge would be of cast-iron, and have only five arches instead of seven, thus reducing the number of piers from six to four. The centre arch would be 150 feet span, and the two side arches be also enlarged to 146 and 130 feet respectively. The width is proposed to be considerably greater than at present.

The committee recommend in their report to the council that they be empowered to ob-

For Info on OCR and PDF Compression visit ThePaperlessOffice.org